

ARKLEY FARM & OHIO POLL DORSET STUD NEWSLETTER



Issue 5 – November 2025

ON THE INTERNET

Our Facebook page is where you will find a regular insight into life at Arkley.

If you could like and interact with our Facebook page it will help the algorithms make us easier to find.

We have also launched our own website where you will find out more about us, the farms we run and our breeding objectives.

SHEEP ARE BACK IN FASHION!

We had a great time earlier this month celebrating 10 years of business, thanks to those that took the time to join in. Pete's cousin Liam a chef from Dunedin, did a great job showcasing what our lamb and beef can become in the right hands.

This desire for quality seems to have spread, forgotten are the lab grown meats and red meat magically is good for you again! Like the last few years, the prices are continuing to surprise us but now in a good way.

I see this season as a time to reap the rewards for your dedication over the last few years (and longer), enjoy these great prices we are receiving. I look forward to hearing how you all make the most of this season and enjoy the fruits of your labour.

ON THE FARM – LIVESTOCK

We had a great winter, with pastures and stock performing well and this led us into lambing with the best grass covers we have ever had. Southland then bought us back down to earth with a cool September and October (and 150+ trees fallen on fences), not terrible for survival but not great for growing grass. We have always had a strong emphasis on breeding sheep that can roll with the punches and culling hard on those that can't, this once again has paid dividends.

We missed the huge rainfall received further south and with our lighter soils (plus a sprinkle of urea) we rebounded well and have been able to purchase a more normal amount of cattle to finish. But are now looking for rain – the joys of farming!

This season to make the most of the great prices along with killing our dry hoggets as winter lambs (haven't kept any for 7 years) we have also killed any wet dry hoggets who haven't cut their teeth. The wet dry hoggets made \$317 which I am stoked about (overall average for the culls is 26.3kgCW, \$278/head). I struggle with the concept of having dry hoggets on farm producing nothing for 13 months and even the hill born perendales are killed if dry.

This season weight will be rewarded as the processors both here and overseas are short of animals, it's an exciting time to be a livestock farmer.



Aaron helping tag stud lambs while we still had feed

ON THE FARM - GRAIN

Autumn sown wheat is looking great as is the autumn barley on the lighter paddocks, the barley on medium soils is looking a bit sulky.

Spring sowing was once again a bit later than I would like with the cooler conditions and windy weather slowing spraying, but it is all now sown. The spring crops have got away to a good start helped by the soil not being as wet as last season.

Now we can concentrate on sowing some young grass and forage brassica crops.

Followed by more tree tidying up after the wind, anyone need some firewood?!



WORMS IN SHEEP – WHAT ARE WE DOING?

This is a growing conversation with some farmers making great progress. This is what we have been doing and my challenge to you is like ours, your sheep are probably more capable than they were 20 years ago. If you haven't already, maybe try some small steps to save some money, time and reduce drench resistance.

- We have practised a variable pre-lamb drenching program of our ewes and no long acting products have been used on any class of stock for almost 2 decades. We are using more fec (fecal egg count) testing and this season we only pre-lamb drenched 40% of our hoggets as they had a very low worm burden.
- If the 2ths get a worm burden in the autumn we only drench the higher ones usually about 30-40% in a bad year and we also terminal tag the bottom 15% on BCS.



Pete, getting Carla samples from a Poll Dorset Texel Ram Hogget

The hedge cutting the previous week, wasn't a great return on investment!

- We terminal tag or cull any ewes that are light from February to September. This sorts out the poor performers and also helps with those that don't handle a worm burden. After buying ewes in to a hill country lease block in 2016 we terminal tagged 40% of the flock on BCS 6 weeks after weaning and over the next few years saw sheep that foraged better and were all round healthier.
- We drench our ewe lambs less often and using FEC tests to tell us when to drench
- This season we are going to start experimenting with fec testing and seeing if we can push drenching our works lambs from 4 weeks to 6 weeks or beyond on our home farm.
- On our drier hill block we have dropped the pre-wean drench and have seen weaning weights increase (I'm not saying this is linked, but at least it wasn't a negative outcome. Also I don't think mustering and moving young lambs is great either)

After seeing the good results in our commercial Perendale and Perendale X flocks with rams bred by Robert Gardyne who has used Carla Saliva Test and conversations with a couple of clients who were dealing with worm challenges on farm. We have decided to use Carla

on our stud rams, this will be most beneficial for our maternal clients as terminal lambs shouldn't be on farm long enough to cause worm problems.

We have chosen Carla testing over FEC testing because Carla has a positive relationship with Dag Score and Growth rates, we have also experienced first hand the positive effect on our farm. As with anything new it will take a while to make

progress on this front and we see it as a secondary trait like IMF rather than a primary trait such as structure, survival, growth and meat yield. As we have previously experienced the negative outcomes of other stud breeders get side-tracked by a secondary trait at the cost of primary traits.



Walk over weighing at Bowen Park Poll Dorset Research Stud

AUSSIE TRIP

In the winter we had the chance to ditch the kids and head over to Aussie to check out the Poll Dorset scene over there (and a bit of holidaying). It was a great chance to visit plenty of studs and to get a good feel for what is happening over there. It was hard to tell if their genetics are any better than what we have in NZ or not, but we have made the connections to bring in what we think will have the best chance of working over the next few years.

One thing the Aussies are beating us on in commercial lamb production is IMF (Intramuscular Fat) the average IMF in Aussie is about 4.2% and it is only 1.9% in NZ (our own commercial lambs were 3.3% last season). This is mostly due to their lambs being killed at heavier carcass weights.

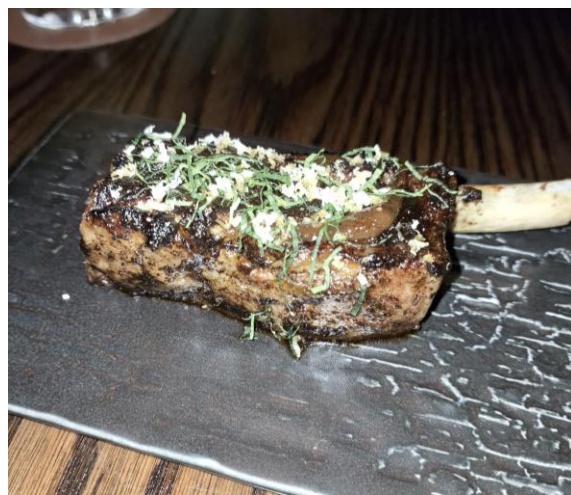
As with beef, IMF for lamb will be something we will be paid for going forward and the Poll Dorset breed is set up to accommodate this, but more importantly how our lambs are fed makes the biggest difference. The lambs that are fed better and ideally killed a bit bigger will give better IMF, genetics provide the opportunity for IMF rather than being the complete solution.

I also believe with IMF it is more important not to be bad (reduce the poor eating experiences of lamb) as an industry rather than to push to the extreme where the market is small and takes a huge commitment to make viable. Those lambs that are killed, that are "hard" and only 17kgCW will be a terrible eating experience which damages the customers perception of lamb as a high-end meat option.

COMMERCIAL SHEEP FOR SALE

As a most of you will know, one of the farms we lease, Bracken Hill is on the market. We have enjoyed farming there for the last 5 years but are also looking forward to consolidating and see plenty of room to focus on increasing returns per ha. With over 900ha there is still plenty of scale.

With this we will have some sheep for sale early next year, what age/ages of sheep we sell will depend on the market. If you know of anyone who is looking for genuine capital stock there will be some Coopdale Texel ewes to sell. Also if anyone wants to try some first cross Poll Dorset – Coopdale Texel ewe lambs they will also be available.



Lamb Rib @ Fire Door in Sydney, the result of the Lambpro breeding program which we visited and who have used Ohio genetics

STUD NEWS – RAM SALES

We are looking forward to presenting the 2024 born rams to you. This season's line up includes the first progeny from Glengarry 498/22, the most expensive 2022 born Poll Dorset sold in New Zealand and Wharetoa Texel A75/22 who Garth Shaw used in his Texel stud before selling, as well as plenty of exciting home-grown sires.

We are selling our rams in a similar manner to last season. There will be 4 or 5 top pick Poll Dorset rams going to the Gore A&P ram fair on the 20st of January (also on Bidr). We would encourage any of our commercial clients to come along to this or to watch and have a bid on [bidr - NZ's Virtual Saleyard](#)

Our commercial rams will then be sold privately again at Trevor's woolshed.

After plenty of thought and a fair few requests from clients we're moving to a clearer, more transparent three-tier pricing system for our commercial rams. This brings us in line with the wider industry and better reflects the value of the genetics we're producing.

	Ohio Poll Dorset	Ohio Poll Dorset Texel/Wharetoa Meatmakers
Elite	\$1,250	\$1,250
Premium	\$1,000	\$1,000
Performers	\$800	\$800

When we took over the stud, for original clients we kept prices steady as the last couple of seasons were tough for everyone. With lambs and mutton prices now bouncing back strongly, it feels like the right time to tidy this up.

For most of you it will be very similar or the same to what you've been paying. This change allows clients to pick the bracket that suits their own situation, this puts the control into your hands, our aim is to breed the best rams. We appreciate your investment in genetics, which helps us keep up with the latest breeding technology to keep pushing genetic gain while continuing to improve the physical type and structure of your rams.

We were pleased to see plenty of spouses and a few kids come along ram buying last season. Once again, this season we encourage you to bring along family and team members, we will have some toys and treats to keep the kids occupied if they lose interest. We want to keep encouraging the next generation.

If you can flick us an email with how many rams you're after, your preferred bracket, and whether you're wanting Poll Dorset or Poll Dorset Texels, that'll help our planning.

There is a small number of Poll Dorset Texel/shedding cross rams available this autumn, call if this interest you. This is very much a side experiment at this stage. But these are showing great survival and are very suited to hogget mating.

As always, we welcome your phone calls or visits and enjoy hearing your feedback and what is happening at your place.

Regards,

Pete & Esther Gardyne

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